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FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9012
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 0064
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4834
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 0077
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0062
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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0029
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RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR LIMA 0096
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA 0118
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 0083
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE 0080
RUEHQZ/AMEMBASSY QUITO 0043
RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 0115
RUEHSN/AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR 0241
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0052
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 0083
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 7658
RUEHTG/AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA 0124
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU 9074
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 6031
RUESLE/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 8468
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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TAGS: [CR](#) [NC](#) [PAN](#) [PANAM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [TW](#) [XR](#)

SUBJECT: TAIWAN CONTINUES TO WORRY ABOUT CENTRAL AMERICA TIES

REF: TAIPEI 0427

Classified By: AIT Acting Director David J. Keegan, Reason 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Taiwan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) officials continue to worry about Taipei's diplomatic standing in Central America and are particularly concerned that Panama, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua might consider switching recognition from Taipei to Beijing. MOFA hopes US influence in the region will help Taiwan maintain its relationships. End summary.

¶2. (S) MOFA's immediate concern is Panama (reftel). In two recent meetings with the Acting Director, Foreign Minister James Huang pointed to Panama-PRC meetings in Madrid in mid-February as evidence of Panama's strong interest in exploring the possibility of switching recognition. Huang explained that because the US has interests and influence in the region, Taipei hopes Washington might be able to render some assistance to Taiwan. He added that MOFA assesses Panamanian President Torrijos is inclined to maintain diplomatic ties with Taiwan while expanding commercial ties with Beijing, but Vice-President and Foreign Minister Samuel Lewis is pressuring Torrijos to derecognize Taiwan.

¶3. (C) MOFA Director-General for Latin America Jai-son Ko also expressed concern about Panama and told AIT that despite Panamanian assurances, Taipei is not confident of its standing and does not know "what is going to happen." He stressed that Taiwan would like to work with Washington in

its effort to convince Panama not to recognize Beijing.

¶4. (C) Ko also raised concerns about Nicaragua and Costa Rica. In Nicaragua, he said, there are far too many candidates opposing pro-PRC Sandinista candidate Daniel Ortega in the Fall presidential election, which could split the vote and allow Ortega to win the presidency outright. Ko expressed hope that the US will consider using its influence to encourage the anti-Sandinista candidates to cooperate to find an effective strategy to oppose Ortega.

¶5. (C) In Costa Rica, Ko feared that president-elect Oscar Arias Sanchez will move San Jose closer to Beijing. Within a year, he speculated, Sanchez might move to exchange trade offices with China, as a precursor to formal ties. Separately, Costa Rica's Ambassador to Taiwan, Dr. Oscar Alvarez, told AIT that he expects one of Sanchez's priorities after assuming office will be to expand ties with Beijing and invest in the PRC market. In the past, Alvarez noted, Sanchez has expressed his displeasure with Costa Rica's ties to Taiwan. Alvarez told AIT that many Costa Rican government officials believe Sanchez is preparing to switch ties to Beijing when the time is right.

¶6. (C) Comment: Although Central America is Taiwan's most important region diplomatically, based on AIT's meetings with mid-level MOFA officials, it appears that Taipei does not have a solid grasp on the status of its diplomatic ties with governments in the region. There is a sense of pessimism that Taipei is barely hanging on and must rely on US influence to help maintain Taiwan's ties and provide accurate assessments of Taipei's diplomatic standing. If this trend continues, it is only a matter of time before Taiwan will lose its partners in Central America.

KEEGAN